

Sec. 47-75. Adjustment of unusually large bill.

(a) Any single-family residential customer who receives a water bill for any given month that is greater than 200 percent of the average usage of the customer, the customer may request an adjustment of the bill in the manner provided in this section. Provided, that the customer must make an application within six months of receipt of such bill and only one such monthly bill out of any 12 consecutive monthly bills may be adjusted under this section. If the applicant has not been a customer for a sufficient length of time for the department to determine average usage, the department shall delay the adjustment until it can calculate the average usage. In order to request such an adjustment, the customer must file an application for the adjustment on a form furnished by the utility official. The application form shall contain a statement setting forth an understanding that the application is a government record subject to criminal prosecution for false statements under chapter 37 of the Texas Penal Code, and the customer must state that the application contains no false statements. The application shall identify the bill and briefly state:

- (1) The reasons for the request for the adjustment;
- (2) A description of the additional water consuming devices or fixtures, if any, that have been placed in use by the customer during the current month or the preceding 12 months;
- (3) That there have been no plumbing repairs or necessity therefor during the month for which an adjustment is sought or that the nature of any plumbing defects was not such as would explain the additional usage; and
- (4) Such other information as the utility official may require.”

(b) Upon receiving such application, the utility official shall make an investigation to determine if an error was made, which investigation shall include inspection of the customer’s water meter for accuracy and review of the customer’s billing record. If the initial investigation reveals a billing or meter error, the utility official shall make an adjustment to correct the error. If the investigation does not reveal an error, the utility official may make such further investigation as the utility official deems advisable and shall give full consideration to the statements contained in the customer’s application. If the utility official concludes that, in all reasonable probability, the customer was charged for more water than has the customer consumed during the month in question but is unable to actually account for such unusual quantity, the utility official shall recompute the bill using as the gross quantity 200 percent of the average monthly gross quantity applicable to the customer. A determination by the utility official made in accordance with the provisions of this section shall be final.

(c) If the customer has already paid the bill for which an adjustment is authorized under this section and the adjustment is no more than six times the customer’s average bill, the department shall credit the customer’s account the amount of the adjustment to be applied to the charges thereafter accruing. However, if the adjustment is more than six times the customer’s average bill and the customer requests a refund, or the customer can show extreme economic hardship, the department shall refund the amount of the adjustment. The utility official shall determine whether extreme economic hardship exists.

If a customer discontinues water service before subsequent charges have depleted the credit, the department shall refund to the customer at the time of discontinuance the remaining credit balance minus any overdue debt the customer owes the city.

(d) The provisions of this section shall be cumulative of the provisions of section 47-73 of this Code.